
Do You Ever Use Drugs Alone?

**A Guide For
People Who
Use Drugs**
By
**People Who
Use Drugs**
About Using
Drugs Alone

This guide was created by Project SAFE, a Philadelphia-based harm reduction collective of women, queer, and transgender people who use drugs and do sex work. People who use drugs amid the overdose crisis are experts and pioneers in overdose prevention strategies. Sharing survival strategies is how we stay as safe as we can in a world that harms us through stigmatization and the War on Drugs.

We know a lot of people prefer to use drugs alone for a variety of reasons. The present guide

was created by people who use drugs in Philadelphia. We encourage readers to consider what strategies you use in your cities when doing drugs alone to prevent overdoses. The strategies suggested are not a complete list and do NOT guarantee safety when using drugs alone. Some of this might resonate, some might not. Take what feels right and useful to you. This guide is meant to start ongoing discussions with your community about how to use drugs as safely as possible during the fatal overdose crisis.

LEARN ABOUT THE DAY'S DRUG SUPPLY

Ask people you know about the day's drug supply.

In many places, it is possible to track different batches of dope (heroin/fentanyl). In Philly, for example, sellers stamp bags of dope with different images so that buyers know where it came from and where to find it.



"I don't depend on people to reverse an overdose but I do rely on them to tell me about the state of drugs that day."



"I talk to everyone—people call me Sherlock Holmes, I've never overdosed. I ask a lot of questions about the dope."

Drugs fluctuate daily. See what's going on first.

Keep asking until there is enough information. This information can help people decide how to prepare a test shot, maybe starting with one-quarter or one-half a bag, instead of a whole bag.

WHAT WAS THE HIGH LIKE?

Is it a creeper? Does it have legs? Do you get a rush? Does it knock you out/put you to sleep? Does it have K2? When's the last you did it?

REMEMBER
"Previous overdose increases the probability of future overdose."

"If there is no immediate rush, it might be perceived as weak and overused when really, it's just a creeper."

Use your senses to get information on the quality and strength of the day's supply.

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| <p>Taste</p>  | <p>Dip a finger in the powder and put in on your tongue to see if it tastes different or off.</p> | <p>Touch</p>  | <p>Is the dope a different texture or consistency than usual - hard, sticky, crumbly, powdery?</p> |
| <p>Sound</p>  | <p>What are people saying about the bag? Do people's voices sound odd? Are people gurgling?</p> | <p>Sight</p>  | <p>Does the dope look different than usual? Is a seller you normally buy from around?</p> |
| <p>Observe</p>  | <p>Are people acting unusual? Are there signs of something different or stronger being in the dope?</p> | <p>Feel</p>  | <p>Does using a little bit make you feel how you expect this drug to feel?</p> |

Lessons from sex workers who use drugs on navigating client and provider use.



Have a frank discussion with the client about how frequently they use dope, when was the last time they used, and if they have ever overdosed.

LESSONS:

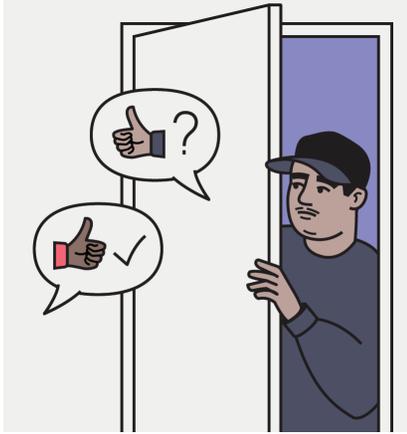
Have naloxone on hand – this will increase the safety of both the worker and the client.

If the client has no opioid tolerance or isn't a regular dope user, they will not wake up in withdrawal from a naloxone dose.

If naloxone isn't on hand, have a plan with your client about what to do or who to call in the event of an overdose. You could plan to use an overdose response app, or a person who is available nearby.

If possible, spend some time early in the date teaching safer drug use skills and how to respond to an overdose, so that overdose precautions become part of the date.

PLAN BEFORE USING



"I usually have a neighbor check on me. She does crack so she knows about drugs."

Ask a trusted friend to check in with you periodically. Some experts said they pay a trusted community member to act as a "sitter" or "spotter" (i.e. to watch and respond) in the event of an overdose.

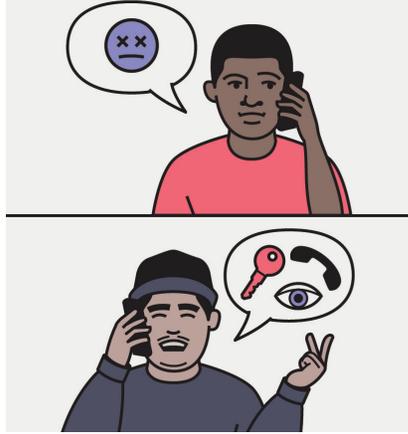
REMEMBER

"Don't use anything new alone."

"Fight the urge to use too much alone."

"Walk around after using a new batch until you know how it hits."

"Start slow. You can always add ingredients to the cake but you can't take them out."



Call someone on the phone to talk you through a test shot, and have a plan in case of overdose. Have a safety plan with the person on the phone for what they will do in the event you stop responding.



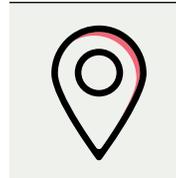
Keep a cold drink, ice, or apple cider vinegar on hand, to "perk" up if the effect is too heavy. People sometimes use stimulants like meth and coke to balance a heavy high, but this can be dangerous and ineffective.



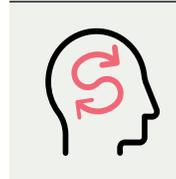
Consider how high you want to get. If you want to get REALLY high when you are alone, use a bit around other people first to test the strength of the batch.



Some people find it helpful to self-administer small amounts of naloxone if they feel the dose is immediately too powerful. Some people choose not to use free "samples" because they feel they are too strong.



Use alone, but have a plan to go to a place afterward where naloxone is available, in the event it is needed.



Ask yourself where you are at emotionally. Are you feeling stressed? Take deep breaths. Don't rush.

USING ALONE

We understand that not using alone is more complicated than just finding someone to use with. A lot goes into making the decision to use drugs with other people. We want you to be as safe as possible. When deciding who you want to use with, consider what qualities make you feel safe with them (i.e. won't steal from you, assault you or ditch you).

**If you are going to use alone,
call the Never Use Alone Hotline:**

800-484-3731

REMEMBER

"You can always do more, you can never do less."

"Start out small. You can always add, you can't take it away."

"Listen to your body, everybody wants to get high - but go slow."

"Don't change your dose alone."
